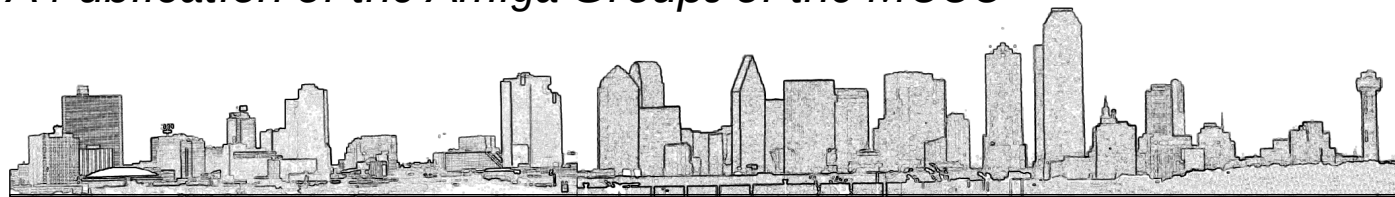


The AGM Connection

A Publication of the Amiga Groups of the MCCC



Fort Worth

July 1997

Dallas

The CDA Decision

The Real Issues and The Reporting

On the 26th of June, the US Supreme Court declared the Communications Decency Act unconstitutional. The statment below is a response to that ruling and to the media coverage of it. I'm including Dale Larson's opinion here because I couldn't have said it nearly so well myself. ...Bill Raecke

As someone who has been online for many years and whose business (<http://www.iam.com>) depends heavily on the Internet, I celebrated today's Supreme Court Decision to affirm the lower court's ruling that the Communications Decency Act is unconstitutional.

The media has dampened my celebration, however, as I have been extremely disappointed in much of the coverage on the ruling.

I watched two television news reports on the subject this afternoon. Reporters continued to refer only to online porn and to protecting children, as if those were the only issues involved. The Supreme Court decision rendered today explicitly and directly contradicts that description of the CDA. Something much more important is going on here.

The CDA was not intended solely to protect children or solely to apply to online porn. In fact, children have little access to the most hardcore online porn, and then only if the children go looking for it while parents choose not to provide direct or technological supervision. Other laws already cover red herrings like obscenity and child-pornography. The CDA was really about prying into the lives of all citizens, child or adult, to enforce a particularly narrow "moral" agenda. Why else would the CDA have included, for example, a clause specifically banning from the Internet any discussion of abortion?

The Supreme Court itself called into question the motives of congressional legislators. "This uncertainty undermines the likelihood that the CDA has been carefully tailored to the congressional goal of protecting minors from potentially harmful materials." The Court went on to say, "The breadth of the CDA's coverage is wholly unprecedented. The general, undefined terms 'indecent' and 'patently offensive' cover large amounts of nonpornographic material with serious educational or

other value."

Correctly evaluating the true effect (and intent) of the law, the court concluded "The CDA, casting a far darker shadow over free speech, threatens to torch a large segment of the Internet community" and to have an "obvious chilling effect on free speech."

Fortunately, the court went much further than simply striking down the CDA. It made clear that the Internet deserves to be afforded the highest protections of the first amendment. It is a perfect haven for individual and democratic freedom, with minimal potential for causing harm by inflicting one's speech (however unpopular) on those who don't wish to be subjected to it. The elements of our society who wish to control what is said, to make the rest of us conform to their "wholesome" ideas for how we should act, will have to look somewhere other than cyberspace. Let them go back to boycotting Disney. The Court says that any future attempts at regulating the net must be defined very narrowly. As Bruce Ennis, lead attorney for the suit against the CDA, said about the ruling, "this is the legal birth certificate for the Internet."

I want to smoke a fine cigar to celebrate this birth of a more democratic and free media. I hope I can get the older popular media to join me.

Sincerely,
Dale L. Larson

P.S. I discussed the CDA in some detail in the forward I wrote to a recent book "Torn Shapes of Desire: Internet Erotica," and that essay is also available online at <http://www.iam.com/tsd/tsd-foreword.html>

Dale L. Larson was a software engineer involved in networking and the Internet. He is now the president of Intangible Assets Manufacturing, the author of a book about networking and online communications, and is the editor and publisher of two literary books that originated on the Internet.

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Disks of the Month

- | | | | |
|------|--|------|--|
| 1253 | MCC_HTMLtext — HTML Text class for MUI
Miami_1.21a — Best TCP/IP program available
New8n1 — Faster replacement for serial.device | 1257 | akPNG — A PNG datatype
PictureDT-V43 — Better datatype for RTG |
| 1254 | Miami_1.21a — Remainder of distribution
Pictures — 322.jpg. An excellent fractal pic | 1258 | film-datatype — A film datatype
MPEG-Datatype — An MPEG datatype |
| 1255 | akSVG-Datatype — A Superview datatype
Deep — An xiPaint datatpe
Soliton — Excellent solitatre game | 1259 | BMPdt — A BMP datatype
FastExec — Moves exec & more to fast memory
faxx-Datatype — For GPFAX documents
Lupe — Magnifying glass for any screen |
| 1256 | akJFIF-Datatype — A JPEG datatype
akLJPG-Datatype — A lossless JPEG datatype | 1260 | MCC_Lamp — MUI Custom Class
MCC_NList — MUI Custom Class |

The AGM Connection

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Address Correction Requested

July Calendar

July 1 — MCCC Board of Director's Meeting
7:30 pm — Mark Stodola's Place

July 8 — Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
7:30 pm — Bell Helicopter Training Facility

July 15 — Amiga North Dallas Chapter
7:30 pm — Addison Road north of Westgrove

Newsletter Deadline — July 26, 7:00 am

August 5 — MCCC Board of Director's Meeting
7:30 pm — Ned Kelly's Place

Membership Watch

Expired June, 1997

William Myatt

Joe Ostrokol



Expiring July, 1997

Joe Algermissen

Joe Dwyer

Norbert Fuhrmann

Jim Pritchett